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To: TPAAG (Transportation Planning Advisory Group)  
From: Constance Mellis - Staff to TPAAG  
Re: **September 23, 2020 TPAAG Meeting**  
Time: 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM  
Place: This meeting will be held virtually

**Join from your computer, tablet or smartphone**  
TPAG

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.  
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United States (Toll Free): 1 866 899 4679

Access Code: 970-067-957

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Action on meeting minutes of Aug 19, 2020
3. Southbridge-Dudley-Webster shuttle service
4. VIA service in Westborough
5. Paratransit Report
6. Customer Service Report
7. Briefs on transportation related meetings including
  - Riders Advisory Committee
  - Transportation Advocacy Coalition
  - Other related transportation meetings
8. WRTA Advisory Board
9. Nomination of Officers
10. Question and Answer
11. Meeting Calendar
12. New Business

This meeting is open to the public. To place an item on the TPAAG agenda or TPAAG questions, call (508) 459-3328. Information for this meeting and all related materials can be made available to individuals with disabilities and individuals with limited English proficiency by contacting (508) 459-3328.

**Transportation Planning Advisory Group**



## **TPAG Meeting Minutes**

**August 19, 2020**

**Attendees:** Nancy Garr-Colzie; Anna Koterski, PBSTM; Carolyn Foley, PBSTM; Sue Moriarty, MASS; Nick Burnham, CMRPC; Ethan Belding, Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging; Steve Stolberg; Mike Kennedy, CLW; Joe Bellil, Easter Seals; Bill Clark, Worcester Yellow Cab; Mark Binnall; Pamela Alvin; Mary Haroyen; Francesca Abbey.

**Meeting minutes** from June meeting were accepted as presented.

**Paratransit Report.** The office is still handling applications for certification and recertification by mail and we expect this to continue for at least a few more months. There have been some personnel changes in the paratransit office. Tess who was the Travel Trainer is now the Customer Service Supervisor and is also handling the ADA paratransit recertification process. We are now looking for a Travel Trainer. This person ideally has some work experience in education or training such as a job coach. Anna is now the Assistant General Manager for WRTAs fixed route service. Carolyn, who has been at PBSTM for 10+ years will be the interim paratransit manager.

### **Paratransit Customer Satisfaction Survey Results**

- This survey and results was discussed and is attached. It should be noted that responses to some of the questions would likely be different today due to the impacts of COVID-19.
- Paratransit staff noted that the response to the satisfaction of the complaint response is impacted by the type of complaint. For instance, if a rider complains about the policy regarding the number of bags that can be taken on the vehicle, they may not be satisfied with the response. Also, if a rider complains that the pickup was late, the confirmation that this is true will not correct the late arrival.
- Staff further commented that riders who do not have internet access are largely older riders but younger riders often have access to a computer. This was confirmed by CMAA staff.

### **Online Reservation System Overview and Survey**

On Jan 1 the online trip reservation portal was opened. It is accessible through the automated fare portal. Our goal was to have 5% of people who have access to the internet use the service. We almost made the goal before COVID but was impacted by reduced ridership overall. Since ridership is increasing again, we hope the number of people using the service will increase. There is a lot of info and instructional videos on the paratransit website on how to use the service including AFC, ORS, request, cancel, trip history etc. They are available in closed caption, several languages and descriptive language. We've heard good feedback on this. We distributed a survey in July to get feedback and will be collecting the results. This system was funded through a MassDOT grant. The Carroll Center has been a good partner for this project. One commenter suggested that a phone number should be included on the survey.

### **MassDOT Grant Awards**

- WRTA was awarded grant funding to provide shuttle service connecting Southbridge, Dudley and Webster. Service began a few weeks ago using a 12-passenger van. This will include a ¾ mile ADA paratransit buffer. This route connects the current routes from Worcester to Southbridge and Worcester to Webster. It is a flag stop service.
- WRTA was also awarded grant funding to provide service through VIA in Westborough. This is expected to begin in Sept. VIA will provide their own vehicles. Service is available to the general public and is a call ahead or app-based service.

**Paratransit Report** was read and attached. There were no questions.

**Customer Service Report** was presented for July. There were a total of 47 complaint cases of which 35 were for fixed route and 11 for paratransit. Of the 11 paratransit complaints, 4 referenced drivers behavior as the primary reason for the complaint (2 were unsubstantiated), 4 were for late pickups, 1 for missed trip, 2 other, 1 security issue at a vendor.

### **COVID-19 Related Policy Changes**

WRTA continues to suspend fare collection policy through Aug. Midday cleaning of buses has begun using fogging machines at the Hub. Daily deep cleaning of buses and vans continues. COAs are receiving cleaning supplies and often clean before each rider. Seats near the bus drivers are being roped off and paratransit service can continue to provide one-to-one service. When it is not possible to provide van service one-to-one, riders will be assigned seating to provide social distancing. Mandatory mask use continues.

### **Transportation Meeting Briefs**

- Riders Action Council (formerly Riders Advisory Committee) discussed PPE and cleaning of vehicles. The group will contact WRTA to collect data.
- Transportation Advocacy Coalition met last month to discuss on-demand service.
- AAA transportation was discussed including upcoming discussion with MBTA on The RIDE service.

**WRTA Advisory Board** has not met since June. No update available.

### **Nomination of Officers**

Chair	Mark Binnall	accepted nomination
	Nancy Garr-Colzie	accepted nomination
Vice-Chair	Mark Binnall	accepted nomination
Exec Board	Joe Bellil	accepted nomination
	Mike Kennedy	will be notified
	Mary Haroyan	accepted nomination
	Mark Binnall	accepted nomination
	Francesca Abbey	accepted nomination

Pamela Alvin            will be notified  
Nancy Garr-Colzie    nomination

Nominations will continue at the Sept meeting with elections in Oct.

### **Meeting Calendar**

Next meeting will be in Sept and Oct. The group should begin discussing the calendar of future meeting dates.

Although the next TPAG meeting is scheduled for Sept 16, the group voted to meet one week later than usual since the WRTA Advisory Board will be meeting on Sept 17. This will make it possible for TPAG to discuss issues brought up at the WRTA Advisory Board meeting. **The next TPAG meeting will be held virtually on Wed, Sept 23, 1:00-2:30pm.** Details to follow.



WRTA Advisory Board Report

FY '20/Paratransit Brokerage Services

	June-20	May-20	June-19
Application Trips Requested	0	0	101
Trips Requested	3790	2757	9200
Capacity Denials	0	0	0
Total Trips Scheduled	3790	2757	9200
Cancellations	804 (20.5% of scheduled trips)	664 (23.1% of scheduled trips)	1714 (18.2% of scheduled trips)
No Shows	48 (1.2% of scheduled trips)	31 (1.1% of scheduled trips)	146 (1.5% of scheduled trips)
Missed Trips	0	0	7
Trips Completed	2938	2062	7340
Companion(s)	0	0	86
PCA(s)	322	241	921
Total Trips Scheduled (including Companions)	3260	2303	8347
Elder Shopper	0	0	268
Applications Requested	65	41*	64
Applications Completed	67	30*	45
Incomplete Applications	0	11*	19
Total New Eligible	45	42	46
Total ADA Eligible	2320	2340	2378
Total ADA Conditional Eligibility	143	145	261
No Longer Eligible	56	84	46
Total In-eligible	0	1	1
No-Shows Excused	14	5	51
No-Show Suspensions	1	1	4

\*Does not include PCA's and Companions

\*updated 8-19-20







## 2019 Paratransit Customer Satisfaction Survey Results

Below are the results from the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) 2019 Paratransit Customer Satisfaction Survey conducted by Central MA Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) staff.

Surveys were collected from late October through late November 2019. In total, 229 surveys were completed. Surveys were distributed in both a paper format, and an online version using Survey Monkey. Surveys were generated in English, and Spanish. 228 surveys were completed in English, and one was completed in Spanish.

Paper copies of the survey were mailed to 500 random ADA paratransit clients. As of July 2019, there were 2,378 Total ADA-eligible clients in the WRTA paratransit system. A cover letter was mailed with each survey to explain the purpose of the project and to provide instructions on how to complete the survey, either by paper (with prepaid return postage), or online. As a token of appreciation, WRTA provided \$5 into the Automated Fare Account (AFC) for each client who completed a survey.

Survey announcement information was made available on both WRTA fixed-route and paratransit websites, and WRTA social media.

Below are the results of each individual question, broken out by "sections" of the survey. Response rates are included with each question to indicate the number of individual responses to a particular question. All results are displayed in summary formatting.

For the survey to be considered statistically significant, using a population size of 2,378 ADA-eligible clients, with a 90% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, 245 surveys were needed. Falling just short of the survey goal, the results are still considered valid for planning and general knowledge purposes.

### Passenger Trip Information

1. When you take a trip, do you usually travel by:

- **Van:** 95 (41%)
- **Cab:** 23 (10%)
- **Both:** 111 (48%)

Response Rate: 229/229 = 100%

2. How do you schedule trips?

- **Call on my own:** 193 (85%)

- **Someone submits trip requests for me:** 21 (9%)
- **On a standing order:** 10 (4%)
- **Other:** 3 (1%)

Response Rate: 227/229 = 99%

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3. In the past few months, how many one-way trips have you taken per week?

- **Less than 3 trips:** 144 (65%)
- **3 to 5 trips:** 51 (23%)
- **6 to 10 trips:** 15 (7%)
- **10+ trips:** 10 (5%)

Response Rate: 220/229 = 96%

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4. In the past few months, have you ever had to call because a vehicle was late?

- **Yes:** 82 (36%)
- **No:** 144 (64%)

Response Rate: 226/229 = 99%

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If yes to Question 4, how often have you had to call?

- **Once or Twice:** 37
- **Few times:** 13
- **Tangential Information:** 19

Response Rate: 69 Responses

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5. In the past few months, have you been denied a trip request for the time you wished to travel?

- **Yes:** 13 (6%)
- **No:** 210 (94%)

Response Rate: 223/229 = 97%

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If yes to Question 5, please explain:

- Time was after fixed route either began or ended in requested area.
- Unaware of time change in schedule.
- Full schedule (request for non-medical appointment).
- Scheduling mix-up.

Response Rate: 13 Responses

## Service Information

6. Using the options below, please check the option that best matches your opinion:

Below are the number of individual responses to each of the options. The weighted average is created by multiplying the number of responses in a particular column by a weight (Excellent = 4, Good = 3, Fair = 2, Poor = 1) and dividing it by the total number of responses to each service option.

For example, to the option of 'Call takers are courteous' there were 151 Excellent responses, 65 Good responses, 9 Fair responses, and 4 Poor responses. The higher the weighted average number, the more favorable the opinion is.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Individual Responses	Weighted Average
Call takers are courteous	151	65	9	4	229	3.59
Phone system is easy to use	133	76	13	7	229	3.46
Trips are easy to schedule	143	70	12	4	229	3.54
Reservation process is quick	141	67	18	3	229	3.51
Reservation process is easy to understand	144	72	11	2	229	3.56
Drivers are professional	155	59	14	1	229	3.61
Driver operated the vehicle safely	159	57	13	0	229	3.64
Vehicles are clean	143	59	22	5	229	3.48
I feel safe using the service	165	56	6	2	229	3.68
I get picked up on time	117	65	38	8	228	3.28
I get dropped off on time	119	69	32	8	228	3.31
Overall Paratransit Service	134	84	7	3	228	3.53

7. In the past few months, have you filed a complaint?

- Yes: 19 (8%)
- No: 206 (92%)

Response Rate: 225/229 = 98%

8. If yes to Question #7, were you satisfied with the complaint process?

- Yes: 6 (32%)
- No: 8 (42%)
- No Response: 5 (26%)

Response Rate: 14/19 = 74%

If no, please explain why:

- No response/nothing was done.
- Operator was not told about complaint.

Response Rate: 7 Responses

9. Do you feel that you are receiving enough information about the service or changes within the service?

- **Yes:** 187 (82%)
- **No:** 40 (18%)

Response Rate: 227/229 = 99%

If no, please explain why:

- I do not receive any information, or communication.
- I do not know enough about what towns may be scheduled, how far from Worcester, or extra fare costs.
- Main brochure needs updating; items from 4-5 years ago should be removed and new items should be added.
- Depends on the company (operating the trip).
- Would like updates on meetings regarding service changes.

Response Rate: 17 Responses

## Passenger Information

10. What community do you live in?

- |                         |                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Auburn: 24 (10%)      | • Oxford: 9 (4%)          |
| • Boylston: 2 (1%)      | • Rutland: 1 (0%)         |
| • Charlton: 1 (0%)      | • Shrewsbury: 2 (1%)      |
| • Holden: 2 (1%)        | • Webster: 1 (0%)         |
| • Leicester: 8 (3%)     | • West Boylston: 4 (2%)   |
| • Millbury: 2 (1%)      | • West Brookfield: 2 (1%) |
| • Northborough: 20 (9%) | • Westborough: 4 (2%)     |
| • Northbridge: 1 (0%)   | • Worcester: 146 (64%)    |

Response Rate: 229/229 = 100%

11. Do you have access to the internet at home?

- **Yes:** 119 (52%)
- **No:** 110 (48%)

Response Rate: 229/229 = 100%

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12. Do you visit the WRTA Paratransit website ([www.wrtaparatransit.com](http://www.wrtaparatransit.com)) for any information?

- Yes: 58 (26%)
- No: 168 (74%)

Response Rate: 226/229 = 99%

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13. I am...

- Male: 78 (34%)
- Female: 148 (65%)
- Prefer not to say: 3 (1%)
- Self-describe: 0

Response Rate: 229/229 = 100%

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14. My age is...

- Under 18: 4 (2%)
- 19 to 24: 9 (4%)
- 25 to 34: 5 (2%)
- 35 to 49: 14 (6%)
- 50 to 59: 28 (12%)
- 60 and over: 168 (74%)

Response Rate: 228/229 = 99%

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15. I am...

- African-American: 19 (8%)
- Asian: 3 (1%)
- Caucasian: 150 (66%)
- Hispanic: 13 (6%)
- Prefer not to say: 18 (8%)
- Other: 25 (11%)

Response Rate: 228/229 = 99%

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## Automated Fare Collection (AFC) Information

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16. How do you currently add funds to your Automated Fare Collection (AFC) account?

- Cash: 23 (10%)
- Check or Money Order: 49 (21%)
- Credit/Debit Card via Customer Service: 111 (48%)
- Credit/Debit Card Online: 46 (20%)

Response Rate: 229/229 = 100%

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17. Is paying for your trips ahead of time easier than paying on the vehicle?

- **Yes:** 205 (93%)
- **No:** 16 (7%)

Response Rate: 221/229 = 97%

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## Online Reservation System (ORS) Information

The WRTA is currently developing an 'Online Reservation System' (ORS) that will enable customers to self-manage trips through an online portal. Customers will be able to request trips, view past trips, and cancel trips through the web system.

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18. In the past few months, how often do you call Customer Service to schedule trips?

- **Daily:** 6 (3%)
- **Weekly:** 44 (20%)
- **Couple times a week:** 31 (14%)
- **Few times a month:** 135 (63%)

Response Rate: 216/229 = 94%

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19. Would you be interested in the ability to schedule trips online versus calling Customer Service?

- **Yes:** 61 (28%)
- **No:** 154 (72%)

Response Rate: 215/229 = 94%

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If yes, please provide your name and e-mail address:

Response Rate: 48/61 = 79%

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20. Would the ability to schedule trips online lead you to schedule trips more often?

- **Yes:** 48 (22%)
- **No:** 167 (78%)

Response Rate: 215/229 = 94%

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## Passenger Feedback

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21. What could the WRTA do to improve paratransit service? The following responses have been summarized for content and clarity.

- Ability to call on the same day of appointment.
- Access to online trip history.
- Allow for grocery shopping with a reasonable number of bags in lieu of the present policy.

- Always be on time.
- Be more prompt on return trips.
- Call when vehicles will be late.
- Clean up some of the cabs.
- Education (passenger).
- Emergency same-day service.
- Expand service to other areas, such as Framingham.
- Extend service to holidays, if vans are not available, cabs could be used instead.
- Give people a choice on how they pay fares – AFC or on the vehicle.
- Give the name of the driver, or company.
- Hire more drivers.
- Identify whether a van or cab will be providing the trip.
- Include TPAG meeting notices on the vans.
- Make service available 24 hours a day, seven days a week – similar to Uber/Lyft or livery service.
- More van service versus cabs.
- Offer an on-demand service, similar to what the MBTA Ride offers in Boston.
- Online access.
- Online reservations would be very helpful, along with paying in advance online.
- Passengers should not have to be on the vehicle for longer than one hour after boarding the van.
- Provide the driver our phone number to send texts or calls when they are waiting.
- Same day service.
- Schedule trips closer to pick-up times requested.
- Would like the option of choosing trip by either van or cab.

Response Rate: 99/229 = 43%

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22. Additional Comments: The following responses have been summarized for content and clarity.

- Allow us to renew/re-certify online.
- Call passengers when vehicle is outside, or before they arrive at the destination.
- Drivers are caring, courteous, nice, and wonderful.
- Drivers should be part of the discussion to make service more efficient.
- Great service.
- Great to know service is available when my family is unavailable.
- I am extremely grateful and pleased with paratransit.
- I love having WRTA paratransit as a transportation option. The drivers, dispatch, and call center have been a pleasure to work with and provide wonderful customer service.
- I am very pleased with every aspect of paratransit from the application to the actual trip.
- I would be open to paying small fees for extra things like requesting a ride by myself, specifically requesting a cab instead of a van, etc.
- Make the ORS program easy to use; I was part of the pilot program but gave up because it was too difficult to use.
- Most of the cabs are dirty.

- Thank you for your service!
- The service has been much better the past few months.
- WRTA provides a wonderful service for me because without this I would not be able to get out at all.

Response Rate:  $67/229 = 29\%$

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23. To receive \$5.00 in your AFC account for completing this survey, please provide the following:

- Name: 196 Responses
- Client ID #: 136 Responses